The Information Highway- How it will Change Your Life , was the title of the workshop I attended fifteen years ago while teaching in a grade 5/6 classroom. Internet had not yet arrived in our school division but we were preparing for it. Last fall, I found myself back teaching in Grade5/6 and now had access to a SMARTBOARD, Laptop, Technology Services and Professional Development to use the internet and technology devices that have changed how I teach, in ways I could not even contemplate fifteen years ago. This was my first year with the SMARTBOARD project, while others have been with it for two or three years. My goal this year was to implement this new technology in my classroom.

For my unit on Space, I worked with the Teacher-Librarian for resource based units. Using the SMARTBOARD set up in the classroom and accessing the rolling laptop cart, we modeled for the children accessing the school provided data bases for research and how to make a bibliography for a website article. The students developed and typed reports on their planet. To conclude the unit each student made a powerpoint of a planet to present to the class. As new information is constantly arriving from the Hubble telescope, the students could use this information which had not yet appeared in print in our library. During the time I was working on the unit, CBC news would have a new article almost daily about space on their website and I could show the news report for all the students to see in the morning. Later we could participate in a webcast with the Saskatchewan Science Center when they close circuited an interview with Chris Hadfield, an astronaut, which we viewed from our classroom.

My unit on Electricity in Science used more of the SMARTBOARD technology. Through a Professional Development Session, I learned about Prezi and was stepped through how to incorporate videos from the internet and information in this format. I used this for the beginning of my unit. Readymade SMARTBOARD lessons were found and these interactive activities were a great resource for my students as the majority of them did not have the reading skills to read from the textbook. I also had four EAL students in my classroom and the pictures helped to get the concept across to them. The students were very engaged and learned well from this format.

For me, the key to the success I had this year was having the data projector and SMARTBOARD mounted in my classroom so I was not constantly dealing with set up. The IT department was another integral part as they constantly addressed any problems I had with technology quickly and efficiently. The Professional development provided by Leanne Forrest was another reason for my success. Through PD, I was shown how to set up Prezi, and walked through it at the same time, I also learned about Twitter, IGoogle and other information that I would not have been able to do on my own. The PD also allowed me access to ideas given to me by the other teachers who had used the SMARTBOARD for 2-3 more years than I had. This information and the sites they gave me were timesaving and very effective for my classroom. Lastly the laptop which was completely aligned with the school divisions programs allowed me to work on the lessons at home. This convenience allowed me more time to review and prepare for lessons as I was not limited to just the time I physically was in the school.

The way teachers teach, present information and use the technology skills the students already have when they arrive in our classrooms has definitely changed in the last 15 years. Thanks to the SMARTBOARD project I had the ability to use the technology to better help my students develop the skills necessary in today’s world. I do not know what changes technology will bring in the next 15 years but I am thankful for PD opportunities such as this so all teachers who want to learn can be supported in their endeavors.